



Rep. Jeff Morris

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2011 Legislative Report

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WA STATE DEPT
OF PRINTING 98501

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**Your Representative
Jeff Morris**

40th District 2011 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Dear Neighbors,

It is an honor to represent you in Olympia. This year was the most difficult, challenging and frustrating session I have had in my service to the 40th District. The decisions that were required by the recession and the budget shortfall were heartbreaking. I had hoped that we could accept the challenge to make fundamental change in the structure of state government. We had the opportunity to make a paradigm change in the way that our government delivers the services that our citizens need and expect. I deeply regret that this opportunity was lost in the struggle of special interests to preserve the status quo.

One of the reasons that makes it such an honor to represent you is that I believe you understand that I will not be a tool of special interests. I am proud of my record of working for good public policy. I evaluate each issue based on its own merits, listening to all sides and making my decisions based on many factors. This often puts me in the cross-hairs of competing interests. I am often deemed to be too liberal by one side and too conservative by another group – all on the same issue. These groups push their positions not because of overall good public policy but because it helps their own interests.

I feel that it is time for good government reform in Washington state. I will continue to work hard to deliver the most efficient and

effective government services possible. And I assure you that I will do that despite the competing efforts of labor, business, and other special interests to sway policy to their particular benefit. We have an opportunity and an obligation to make fundamental change that challenges all sides.

This newsletter will cover some of the issues that I worked on this session. I had some successes, but I also had good public policy bills that failed due to competing special interests. That will not deter me in my future efforts.

Thank you for your continued support. I appreciate hearing from you and hope that you will continue to be engaged in good public policy for all of Washington.

Sincerely,



40th District • Your Representative Jeff Morris



Jeff with Port Commissioners Scott Walker and Jim Jorgenson, and new Port Director Charlie Sheldon.

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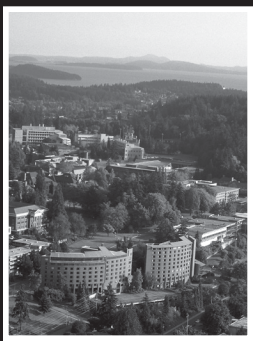
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COMMITTEES

- Transportation
- Environment
- Technology, Energy & Communications



WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



I worked closely with President Bruce Shepard and his staff to make sure that the budget addressed the underfunding of WWU on a dollars per student basis. Western has historically been funded by the state at fewer dollars per FTE student than any of Washington's other higher education institutions, leaving a difference of approximately \$13-17 million per biennium between Western and CWU, EWU and Evergreen State College. This disparity in funding means the impact of budget cuts would be hardest and most severe on Western.

By righting this historical imbalance, WWU will be able to preserve signature programs such as Fairhaven College, Huxley College and Shannon Point Marine Center.

I am proud of the fact that Western Washington University is a leader in our state, delivering high quality education with innovative programs and efficient use of resources. I will continue to fight for equitable funding for WWU, even in the face of our dire budget challenges.

IMPROVING OUR FERRY SYSTEM



Our ferry routes are vital to us; they're our local highways. This session we've continued to make progress and made reforms, something I've been working on since day one in Olympia.

First off, funding for a second 144-car ferry has now been secured. This is really important and enables us to complete the five-vessel replacement plan that is underway. Our ferry boats are old and new ones will make the system more reliable. Funding comes from finding efficiencies within ferry costs, and a new 25-cent charge on ferry fares that will go into a replacement account. In addition, we were able to prevent any cuts to ferry service and runs that were being proposed.

Unfortunately key accountability measures for management at Washington State Ferries were not signed into law. A governor's partial veto removed language I had developed, because I believe the health of our ferry system will continue to be in jeopardy if we don't fix the top. Efficient management will mean more funding for runs and lower fares, both of which continue to be at risk.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET AND PROJECTS

Improving our transportation infrastructure is a key priority for our communities. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I helped develop a \$9 billion two-year transportation budget that will help increase mobility and ease congestion around the state.

State transportation projects are especially helpful now as we climb out of the recession. This two-year budget will create or sustain 43,000 jobs in our struggling construction industry, and a strong transportation system helps our businesses efficiently move goods.

Locally, the state will invest in these projects:

- \$3.9 million to rebuild the ramp between I-5 and SR 542
- \$62.3 million in ongoing improvements and preservation at the Anacortes Ferry Terminal

Improvements and preservation will also be ongoing at other terminals:

- \$18.7 million for Friday Harbor Terminal
- \$18.3 million for Lopez Island Terminal
- \$16.1 million for Orcas Island Terminal
- \$2.9 million for Shaw Island Terminal



RENEWABLE ENERGY, GREEN FUTURE

Clean energy is not only important to our state's energy and environmental future, it's been a bright spot in our state's economy. I continue to push for stronger policies through the House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee that will enable the renewable energy sector to truly take off in our state.

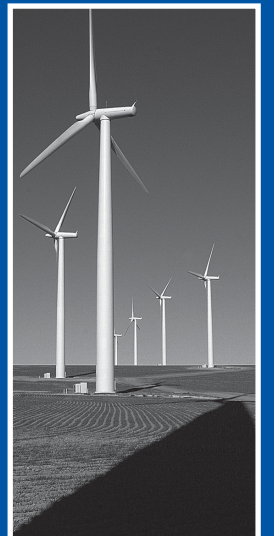
Unfortunately the two bills I discuss below were passed by the House, and then killed in the Senate. If we want to make Washington a leader in renewable energy, then we need leaders in Olympia to take on special interests and pass intelligent energy policies. While the Senate refuses to take up important energy legislation, the nation and world is passing us by. Hopefully next session the Senate will see the need for action and move our state's energy policies forward.

CUTTING RED TAPE ON CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS

Emerging technologies in renewable energy can be difficult to track, and that's become very clear as local cities and counties struggle to permit local projects. Fortunately the state has a council with this expertise that could ensure a renewable energy project is sited well. My House Bill 1081 would have allowed the state council to permit small projects.

INCREASING ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN HOME PRODUCTS

Energy efficiency continues to be the most cost-effective way to plan for our energy future. My House Bill 1003 would have put minimum efficiency standards on several consumer products, which would reduce not only the amount of electricity they use, but allow families to reduce their utility bill.



CLEAN AIR AND WATER PROTECTING LAKE WHATCOM FROM TOXIC ALGAE

One of the most important bills to pass this session, for our community, is House Bill 1489 to eliminate phosphorus from most lawn fertilizers. Phosphorus is a chemical that helps grass grow or rebuild, which isn't necessary to keep your lawn green. As it washes away from lawns and into our streams, phosphorus is then 'helping' grow toxic algae blooms in places like Lake Whatcom. Since fertilizers can do their job without phosphorus, and exceptions are made for those growing lawn turf, this was a common-sense move to help some of our struggling waterways.



MAKING WASHINGTON COAL-POWER FREE

As we continue to build renewable energy sources and look at ways to reduce greenhouse gases, power sources like coal have taken hits. In our state, we have only one plant in Centralia, and it's responsible for a lot of the state's dangerous pollutants. I helped shape an agreement this session to gradually shut down this plant by 2025, ensure the local economy can rebound, reduce pollution levels, without hurting our state's power needs. The Senate version we passed, SB 5769, sends a strong message that Washington supports a clean energy future.